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Assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in compliance with its request in resolution 62/96. It provides a status report and an analysis of the current challenges to the delivery of relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in compliance with its resolution 62/96, in which it requested the Secretary-General to encourage relevant agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to provide assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly in the areas of education for orphans, medical care and treatment for victims of sexual violence, including HIV-positive victims, trauma and psychological counselling, skills training and microcredit programmes; to support activities aimed at genocide victim remembrance and genocide prevention; and to support efforts to enhance judicial capacity-building.

II. Review of major developments

2. Fifteen years after the tragic events that occurred in Rwanda, the country is slowly recovering and on the path to a more promising future. Overall, Rwanda's economic performance continues to be on track. Growth is driven mainly by the agriculture sector and improved performance in the manufacturing and service sectors. In addition, structural reforms have helped to maintain both good macroeconomic performance and substantial improvements in the social indicators.

3. The Government has shown strong commitment to national reconciliation and consolidation of peace through demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. The democratization effort focuses on a decentralized and inclusive administration representing all segments of the population, including marginalized communities, political parties and academia. As a result, remarkable progress has been made in peace and stability through the strengthening of democratic institutions and processes.

4. The strongest performance was recorded in the years immediately after the crisis, with 10.5 per cent annual average growth in GDP from 1996 to 2002. Growth slipped to an annual average of 5.5 per cent from 2003 to 2006, but recovered to 7.9 per cent and 11.5 per cent in 2007 and 2008, respectively. The continued strong performance is driven by prudent reforms and public expenditure management that are supported by good economic governance, strong performance in the agriculture and service sectors, and significant public and private investments. Rwanda, like most countries in the developing world, has also been affected by the global commodity price escalation as well as the financial crisis. High commodity prices, contracted exports, and dwindling access to financial resources will continue to have an impact on growth and government programmes. As a result, GDP growth in 2009 is projected at around 5.5 per cent.

5. Overall, poverty fell from 60.5 per cent in 2000/01 to 57 per cent in 2005/06. There was also a decline in the levels of infant and maternal mortality, HIV infection and malaria. Primary school enrolment has increased and nutrition levels have improved. Rwanda is a leader in gender equality, surpassing all countries in female representation in Parliament and in executive positions in Government, including at the ministerial level. In the light of the those improvements, Rwanda is on track to achieve Millennium Development Goals 2 (universal primary education), 3 (gender equality) and 6 (combat HIV/AIDS).

III. Current challenges to development

6. Rwanda is confronted with many challenges in its pursuit of development, including high population density (368 persons per sq. km), limited access of the population to safe water and energy, poor infrastructure, high reliance on subsistence, and limited participation of the private sector in the economy.

7. The genocide and the surge in HIV/AIDS cases have left Rwanda with one of the world's highest proportions of child-headed households. In education, the main challenge is to accommodate the increasing number of primary school pupils while improving quality.

8. Access to economic and social services by genocide survivors remains limited, as evidenced by the low school enrolment rate of the children of genocide survivors. Most of the survivors' families lack access to adequate housing and safe water, and suffer from discrimination in accessing bank credit as well as economic opportunities in general. The *Ubudehe* programme, a governmental programme of collective action that enforces the tradition of mutual assistance aimed at creating income-generating opportunities, is not effectively addressing these challenges.

9. Moreover, the right to security of the genocide survivors is threatened and there is a lingering genocide ideology, as shown by the recent destruction of a banana plantation owned by genocide survivors in the district of Rusizi and attacks on genocide survivors who testified in court in the Northern Province of Rwanda.

10. To address these challenges, the Government, with the support of the donor community and the United Nations, is making every effort to sustain achievements made in the social sectors in the past one and a half decades. Efforts are being made to modernize the agriculture sector by introducing irrigation systems, investing in physical infrastructure and human capacity to create a climate conducive to investment, as well as to capitalize on opportunities offered by the East African Community, which Rwanda has recently joined. In general, the Government is trying to revise and streamline investment regulations to create additional stimuli for private sector development.

11. The Government continues to implement an ambitious reform programme for poverty reduction. Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, covering the period from 2008 to 2012, has refocused the country's priority on growth and human development. It is built on the foundations laid by the implementation of the first poverty reduction strategy paper, covering the years 2002 to 2006, which was elaborated in a post-conflict environment and focused primarily on sectors that would yield immediate growth benefits and rebuild the human resource and infrastructure base.

IV. United Nations support

12. Through its rights-based approach, the United Nations country team has developed a comprehensive programme aimed at addressing access to economic and social rights by genocide survivors, and at enhancing their political participation at the national and local levels.

13. United Nations support to genocide survivors is provided mainly as technical support to key institutions of the justice sector (the courts and law enforcement

bodies) and public institutions responsible for unity and reconciliation efforts at the district and central levels. Through the Support to Gacaca project, judges are trained, coordination meetings are organized, and a database of cases is maintained for subsequent transfer to the Prosecutor's Office. In addition, the project contributes to documenting the history of the gacaca courts, including the history of individual cases, and the establishment of a documentation centre for when the courts close late in 2009.

14. Through the National Police and the Prosecutor's Office, the United Nations provides psychosocial support to victims as well as transport for, accommodation of and protection to witnesses. In addition, supported projects ensure that all law enforcement departments — as well as the general population — are cognizant of witnesses' and victims' rights. Moreover, support is provided to community policing and crime prevention, which are crucial to maintaining the security of survivors.

15. In the area of conflict prevention and reconciliation, the United Nations in Rwanda supports the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission through the following initiatives: workshops on unity and reconciliation conducted for grass roots-level women leaders in three provinces; seminars conducted for primary school head teachers on addressing the prevailing genocide ideology; creation and maintenance of student debating clubs; support to early warning committees at the provincial level to identify potential conflicts and take preventive measures to forestall the eruption of full-scale violence; stakeholders workshops in 10 districts aimed at holding a dialogue on the prevalence of genocide ideology; the establishment of National Unity and Reconciliation Forums at the national and district levels to strengthen the coordination and tracking of countrywide initiatives relating to unity and reconciliation; harmonization of unity and reconciliation plans by different actors and the sharing of information between the various actors; the holding of forums to sensitize citizens on the national policy on unity and reconciliation; and support to capacity-building forums for outreach to citizens.

16. The United Nations country team has established a good partnership with other development organizations and is undertaking activities across key sectors. The United Nations supports the non-governmental organization Sevota, which assists women and girl survivors of the 1994 genocide in the Kamonyi district (Southern Province) by conducting training and sensitization programmes on HIV/AIDS prevention, prevention of gender-based violence, rehabilitation of victims, gender and development, income-generating activities, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning. With United Nations support, Sevota has assisted 100 women genocide survivors to pay medical insurance fees and undertake income-generating activities such as production of handicrafts and small livestock farming.

17. In the health area, the United Nations supports two major components on nutrition in health facilities across the country that cater to vulnerable population groups, including widows and orphans who are genocide survivors. Under the Mother and Child Health nutrition programme, support is provided to malnourished pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 5 years of age. The United Nations also supports the antiretroviral treatment programmes in 137 health facilities across the country, where food supplements are provided as part of a comprehensive care package for vulnerable people living with HIV/AIDS.

18. In the education sector, the United Nations provides support to the vulnerable, including orphans, through school feeding programmes which provide around

300,000 school children in 300 primary schools with a daily hot meal. Particularly in the case of insecure households, this support is helping to address the dual problem of school retention and performance levels.

19. Most recently, the United Nations country team and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations jointly contributed to the One Dollar Campaign for Genocide Survivors launched by the Diaspora General Directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, in collaboration with the Rwandan Diaspora Global Network. The initiative is an expression of the personal commitment of United Nations staff and their sincere solidarity with genocide survivors. The funds collected from this event (US$ 7,857) will be used to provide accommodation facilities for vulnerable and homeless orphan students.

20. The United Nations is committed to further partnering with the Government of Rwanda in the reconciliation process and in supporting the survivors of the genocide.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

21. Despite the remarkable progress in peace and stability made by Rwanda since 1994, which has translated into improved economic performance, the country still faces enormous challenges to sustain these gains and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. To this end, continued United Nations support in priority areas to consolidate democratic governance and improve productivity is critical.

22. The selection of Rwanda as one of the eight pilot countries for the "Delivering as one" programme in 2007 led to the preparation of the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework for implementation under the programme. This further consolidated United Nations support to the country, enhancing coherence and the efficiency of its operations. The common operational document (2008-2012), which is the basic reference for United Nations system support, focuses on governance, health, education, environment and natural resources management, and sustainable growth and social protection.

23. Within the overall framework of support, interventions for genocide survivors include improving access to justice and witness protection programmes; promoting the participation of children, young people and women in the democratic process, including in decision-making at the national and local levels; providing alternative and complementary education for out-of-school children; enhancing the retention rates at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; expanding the school feeding system in food insecure areas; improving access to quality preventive, curative, promotional and rehabilitative services, especially to victims of sexual violence, HIV-positive persons, children and women; enhancing trauma and psychological programmes; and promoting effective safety nets for the protection of the most vulnerable groups.

24. Further areas of support include enhancing housing and associated amenities for vulnerable groups such as orphans, widows, returnees and the internally displaced. Assistance is also provided for livelihood initiatives, for orphans and vulnerable children, for protection against gender-based violence, and the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive social and economic policies in favour of the poor and disadvantaged.

25. Supporting groups to build sustainable micro-, small and medium enterprises and other income-generating activities through capacity-building, microcredit and access to markets remains a priority for self-sufficiency and poverty alleviation. In addition, support to special initiatives to address the needs of those who have experienced physical injuries that have resulted in mental and/or physical disabilities is critical, as is support for ageing genocide survivors.